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Ministries of Defense: Driving Force in Defense Restructuring

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Ministries of Defense: Driving Force in Defense Restructuring

I. Introduction. For more effective democratic civilian control (and better defense decisions), Ministries of Defense bridge the gap between political institutions and the armed forces. These institutions translate political objectives into military capabilities. MODs, staffed with enough civilian defense experts, provide the continuity and stability needed in a democratic system.

II. Specific functions of MODs:

- A. To structure and institutionalize the power relationship between the elected officials in the government and the armed forces.
- B. To establish a clear division of labor between the civilian and military institutions of the state.
- C. To maximize the efficacy with which the armed forces are employed in the pursuit of government policies and objectives.
- D. To maximize the efficiency with which defense resources are used. This means a constant focus on costs and benefits of particular programs, and transparency in their execution.

III. MODs drive the process of change within the armed forces, making them responsive and relevant. How do they accomplish this?

- A. Policy Development: Deciding how the defense establishment will conduct itself in support of the National Security Strategy.
- B. Budgeting: Prioritizing and overseeing the expenditure of resources. How much oversight of military spending should elected officials have?
- C. Assigning Roles and Missions: Determining civilian and military roles within the defense establishment.
- D. Personnel: Directing force structure, the appropriate mix of personnel - and how they are to be selected, recruited, trained, and promoted.
- E. Acquisitions: Turning the defense guidance of elected officials into the weapons systems needed by military forces.
- F. Facilities: Ensuring that military forces have adequate basing arrangements.

IV. What are the key relationships a Ministry of Defense must develop?

- A. Executive branch: MOD is part of the executive branch - with a mix of civilian defense professionals, political appointees, and military officers.
 - i. Should the Minister of Defense be a civilian? Is it an advantage to have a politically powerful individual in this position?
 - ii. Should a civilian minister be in the chain of command?
- B. Legislature:
 - i. Ultimate source of funding for MOD and the armed forces.

- ii. Investigative and oversight functions.
- iii. Approval of promotion lists.
- iv. How do you generate an interest in defense issues among legislators?

C. Armed Forces:

- i. Ministry role in senior officer nomination and promotion. Provides incentives for senior officers to work with MOD civilian officials.
- ii. Clarifying division of labor between Service and MOD staffs, especially operational vs. administrative roles.
- iii. Who (civilian or military staff) should perform which roles in Ministry?

D. External (non-government organizations, foreign governments, international institutions):

- i. Relationships with NGOs, media, and civil society.
- ii. Relationships with other armed forces and states.
- iii. Relationships with international institutions (UN, OAS, IMF).

V. Requirements for the successful operation of a Ministry of Defense:

- A. Workable processes, followed by legal frameworks, for carrying out the functions of the MOD.
- B. The participation of well-informed civilian cadre with a good capacity to analyze and administer in the Ministry. Must have authority commensurate with responsibilities, and a reasonable expectation of permanence in their positions.
- C. A working arrangement for the participation of professional military officers in the daily work of the Ministry.

VI. Questions/Issues.

- A. How is restructuring initiated at MOD?
- B. How is it managed?
- C. Who within MOD should take the lead?
- D. What contributions do military officers make to the process?
- E. Should the Minister of Defense be in the operational chain of command?
- F. Should a military officer be the Minister of Defense? A retired officer?

VII. Conclusion. The Ministry of Defense is key to the success of any restructuring effort. The Minister is responsible to the elected civilian leadership for the way the armed forces are structured. He must do this with the resources allocated by the legislature, within a lengthy civil-military decision-making process.